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SHAKESPEARE AND THE RISE OF THE EDITOR

Sonia Massai's central claim in this book is that the texts of early printed editions of Renaissance drama, including Shakespeare's, did not simply 'degenerate' or 'corrupt' over time, as subsequent editions were printed using their immediate predecessor as their basis. By focusing on early correctors of dramatic texts for the press, this book identifies a previously overlooked category of textual agents involved in the circulation of early English drama in print and challenges the common assumption that the first editor of Shakespeare was Nicholas Rowe, who published his edition of Shakespeare's *Works* in 1709. This study offers the first sustained account of a 'prehistory' of editing from the rise of English drama in print at the beginning of the sixteenth century to the official rise of the editorial tradition of Shakespeare at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Massai's argument forces us to consider that our understanding of what editing is and what it should do may be at odds with early modern understandings of the text of printed playbooks as both imperfect and continually and progressively perfectible.

SONIA MASSAI teaches Shakespeare and Renaissance Studies at King's College London. She is the editor of *World-Wide Shakespeares: Local Appropriations in Film and Performance* (2005). Her essays have appeared in many books and journals, including *The Blackwell Companion to Shakespeare and the Text* (2007), *Textual Performances* (Cambridge, 2004), *Shakespeare Survey*, *Studies in English Literature* and *New Theatre Quarterly*.

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*For Bianca, Cosimo,
Elda and Giulio*

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Acknowledgements

This book would not have been written if one day in the now distant summer of the year 2000 Thomas L. Berger had not taken the time to discuss my recent work on Nahum Tate over lunch and had not encouraged me to find other ‘editors’ of Shakespeare before the publication of Nicholas Rowe’s edition of Shakespeare’s *Works* in 1709. Long before and since then Professor Berger had been and has continued to be one of the most inspiring teachers and scholars I have had the pleasure to work with. Thank you, Tom! I am also greatly indebted to other colleagues who have kindly read my book, and to Margaret Jane Kidnie and James Purkis in particular, who read the entire typescript at the most inconvenient of times, between Christmas and New Year’s Eve 2005. They generously spared the time to give me invaluable feedback which has helped me refine and adjust some of the theories and arguments I explore in this book. I am also deeply grateful to John Jowett, who read my chapter on the ‘Pavier Quartos’ and an earlier version of my chapter on ‘The making of the First Folio’.

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